

# The Sandstorm

The magazine of the 2nd BCT, 10th Mountain Division - Vol. 1, Issue 5

**From air, land and river:  
Commandos assault  
AIF from all directions**

**Saving lives  
with bare  
claws**





# The Sandstorm

The official magazine of the  
Second Brigade Combat Team

## Public Affairs Officer/Editor

Maj. Webster Wright

## PAO NCOIC/Asst. Editor

Staff Sgt. Angela McKinzie

## Layout/Design/Staff Writer

Spc. Chris McCann

## Broadcaster

Pvt. Jon Cano

If you'd like to see something in this magazine, or if you'd like to make contributions, please e-mail us at:  
[commando\\_brigade@yahoo.com](mailto:commando_brigade@yahoo.com).

We're always striving to improve this publication. Remember, this is *your* magazine.

We reserve the right to edit for security, accuracy, propriety, clarity and space.

More information on the 2nd BCT Commandos can be found at [www.CommandosOf2BCT.blogspot.com](http://www.CommandosOf2BCT.blogspot.com).

The Sandstorm is an official publication of the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division (LI) and is produced by the 2nd BCT Public Affairs Office.

The Sandstorm is in compliance with AR 360-1.



## In this issue:



*Soldiers of the 4th Battalion, 31st Infantry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division patrol the Euphrates River to interdict anti-Iraqi forces.*

*See Polar Valor, page 6*



*Leaders of tribes and nahia representatives in the Commando area of operations meet in Mahmudiyah in the first-ever Qadaa council meeting to discuss security and other concerns.*

*See Qadaa, page 10*

## Commander's Comments

Commandos,



Kershaw

In December 1944 the Germans launched a counteroffensive that took the American Army by surprise and shook the western alliance. What was supposed to be a lightning-fast advance into Germany after the assault at Normandy had turned into a 'long, hard slog.'

The Allied Armies were bogged down on the German West Wall in the midst of a bitter winter when the German Army struck in what became the Battle of the Bulge.

Brig. Gen. Anthony C. McAuliffe, the commander of the 101st Airborne Division which was surrounded at Bastogne, was asked to surrender by the attacking German forces. He replied with one word that became famous in our military history: "Nuts." In typical American fashion, he included the surrender demand in his Christmas message to his troops, a message that began with the line "What's merry about all this, you ask? We're fighting, it's cold, we aren't home."

Although I doubt we'll have snow on

Christmas this year in Baghdad, many of you may be asking, 'what is Merry about this Christmas?' Sixty-two years ago, our grandfathers and great grandfathers heard talk of ending their war by Christmas 1944. Instead they were engaged in the largest battle our Army would ever fight. For some of us, it is a third Christmas away from home in the past five years. And we too have heard a change in the political winds and rumors of new plans.

In the midst of that uncertainty, General McAuliffe chose to recount what they had accomplished with their many comrades at that isolated crossroads in Belgium. It may serve us well to ask what we have accomplished in the three short months since our transfer of authority, with our comrades in the 4th (U.S.) Infantry, 1st (U.S.) Cavalry and 6th Iraqi Army Divisions.

- We have eliminated the largest insurgent sanctuary – the Shakariyah Triangle – as a source of attacks on Baghdad

- We have found over 188 caches, removing materials for making improvised explosive devices, heavy weapons and mortars from the terrorists.

- We have forced terrorist cells to move, leading to their elimination by both Coalition, Iraqi and special operations forces.

- We have seen attacks drop in every category, particularly in our own casualties.

- We have fought side-by-side with the soldiers of the 4th Brigade, 6th Iraqi Army Division "Baghdad Eagles" and watched their capability improve.

As we remember the Christmas season here, I ask that each of you reflect on what we as a team have accomplished in the short time we have been in this war-torn country. We have increased the security of our sector and seen violence decline. We have brought hope to many who thought this a forlorn and lost part of the greater Baghdad area. And, in spite of the sacrifices of many of our comrades, we have all grown as Soldiers and Leaders. We have met the challenges that lesser Soldiers would have left for others.

McAuliffe closed his message by saying "...we are giving our country and our loved ones at home a worthy Christmas present and being privileged to take part in this gallant feat of arms are truly making for ourselves a Merry Christmas."

I hope in years to come, you'll remember this Christmas not for what we were missing, but for what we have been able to accomplish – together.

COMMANDOS!

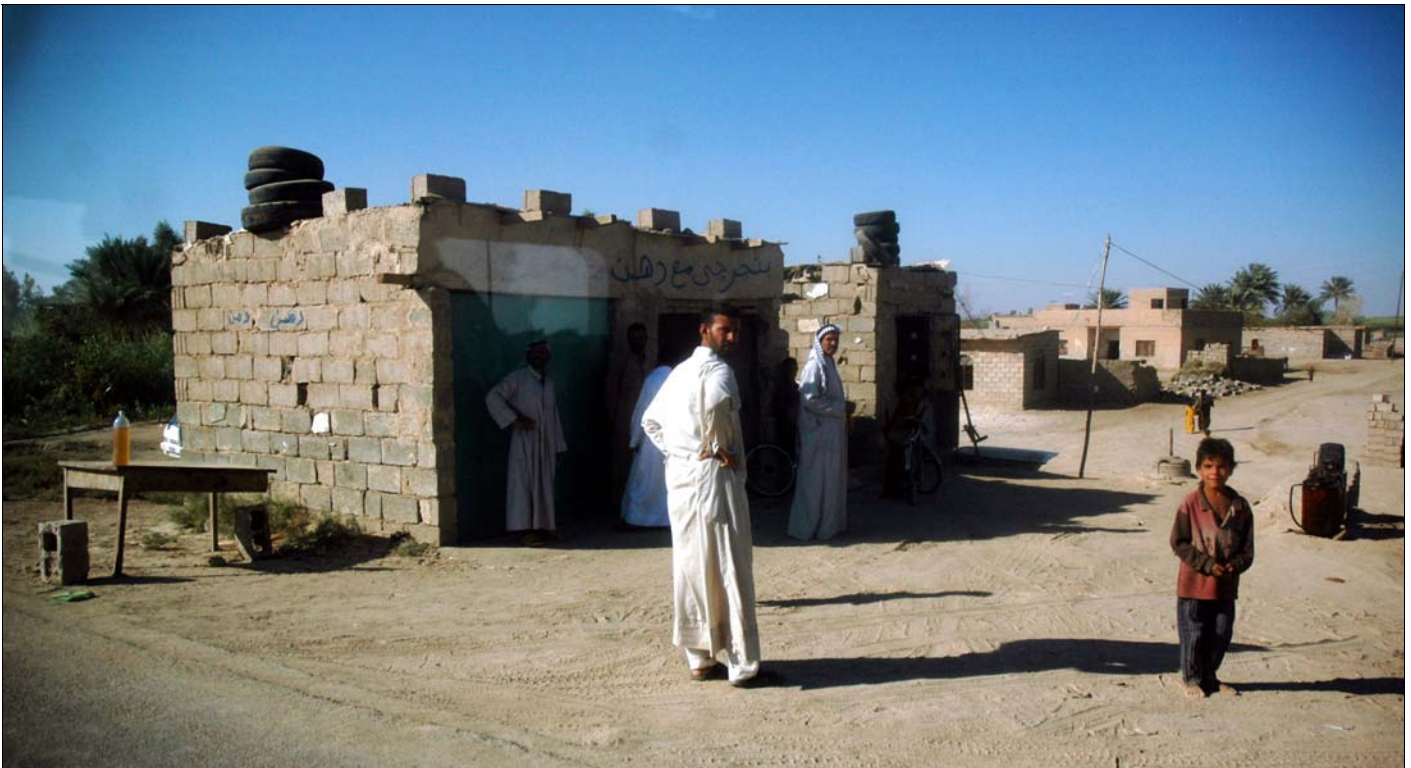


Photo by Spc. Chris McCann, 2nd BCT PAO

## The future of Iraq

*An Iraqi father and son watch a passing American convoy of the 2nd Battalion, 14th Infantry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division (LI) outside the city of Sadr Al-Yusufiyah, Iraq recently. The 2nd BCT "Commandos" regularly patrol the area to keep the local population safe from terrorist activity.*



# Safety officer's simple invention saves lives

By Spc. Chris McCann  
2nd BCT PAO, 10th Mtn. Div. (LI)

CAMP STRIKER, Iraq — One of the top killers of Soldiers in Iraq isn't necessarily combat-related.

Since operations began in March of 2003, many Soldiers have been killed when they can't escape a Humvee — often because it has rolled into one of Iraq's numerous irrigation canals.

When an armored truck is upside-down or on its side, it can take three Soldiers to push a door open enough to get out, and if the doors are sunken into the mud, it can be nearly impossible.

"If you go into a canal, there's a really good chance you won't come out alive," said 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division (LI) Safety

Officer Bill Del Solar.

But Del Solar has been working to change that.

Because a Soldier's chances of being in a vehicle roll-over are relatively high, and the odds of making it out relatively low, Del Solar worked, during his last rotation to Iraq in 2004 and 2005, to develop what is known as the Rat Claw.

"We were having trouble with vehicles," said Del Solar, who is seeing the fruits of his labor on his second deployment to Iraq. "We saw the combat locks, and that Soldiers couldn't get out."

Combat locks keep the doors shut in the event of an improvised explosive device detonation, shielding the passengers. But they make the door harder to open — which can be just as deadly.

"The fire chief and I put our heads together to figure out what

we could do," Del Solar said.

"We realized if you could get your hooks in, you could get the Soldiers out."

After some experimentation, they came up with a flat steel hook that attaches to almost anything — the Humvee's built-in winch or towing hook, a chain set, or aircraft cable.

The tool lets a Soldier grip the nearly smooth door of an armored Humvee with two hooks, attach them to another vehicle, and pull the door off in seconds.

One tug with another vehicle can open the door, or if necessary, pull it completely off.

"If you get a little momentum, you can pull anything off," Del Solar said.

From start to finish, the operation takes less than a minute under ideal circumstances.

"In the worst case, from the

time the vehicle goes into the water until they can get the door open, three minutes," he said. The human brain can go three to four minutes without oxygen before suffering damage, he added. "It's a reasonable amount of time for a rescue."

The 4th Battalion, 31st Infantry Regiment, 2nd BCT, 10th Mountain Division (LI) used the Rat Claw recently when a Humvee was flipped over in an IED explosion.

The doors were damaged by the force of the blast, but Soldiers were able to open the vehicle and extract their wounded comrades, including Lt. Col. Michael Infanti, the battalion commander.

"I remember I was pinned inside the truck," Infanti said. "Fuel was dripping on me, I was in pain. But the Soldiers did extremely well, and the Rat Claw worked. It took one try and I was out of the vehicle."

"Honestly, I don't know how they would've gotten me out with the equipment we had on hand, if we didn't have the Rat Claw. I will live to fight again another day."

The Rat Claw can be used to turn a vehicle over or even pull it completely out of a canal.

"We hope it will save lives by making it easier for fellow Soldiers to rescue each other," Del Solar said.

*A Humvee door is pulled off using the Rat Claw, a flat steel hook developed by 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division (LI) Safety Officer Bill Del Solar. He developed the Rat Claw to aid in extrication of Soldiers from Humvees when the doors are damaged or wedged shut.*



Photo by Spc. Chris McCann, 2nd BCT PAO, 10th Mtn. Div. (LI)

# Thinking inside the box: *medics build modular clinics*

By Spc. Chris McCann  
2nd BCT PAO, 10th Mtn. Div. (LI)

CAMP STRIKER, Iraq — In garrison, a cavity is a minor inconvenience necessitating a trip to the dental clinic. On a patrol base where there are not even portable toilets, however, it can become a major pain — literally — just to get a Soldier medical attention.

Because of the problems of getting Soldiers specialized care in the field, Company C, 210th Brigade Support Battalion, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division (LI) hit upon the idea of the “Doc-in-a-Box.”

The DIAB is simply a doctor’s office built into a large metal storage container, known to the military as a conex, which can be loaded on a flatbed truck and hauled from patrol base to patrol base.

“We can go out, take care of what needs to be taken care of, and come back to re-fit,” explained Cpl. Jamie Bidwell, a medic with 210<sup>th</sup> BSB, while painting the inside of one of the containers. “We want to bring care to the Soldiers. Instead of taking the force from the fight, we’ll take the care to them.”

The container was lined with plywood

walls by Kellogg, Brown and Root contractors. The rest of the work is done by Soldiers of Co. C.

“I’m familiar with wiring from previous deployments,” Bidwell said. “I’m a medic of all trades.”

Two of the containers are already out in the field, one fully equipped as a dental clinic; the other is built for physical therapy.

Soon to follow will be behavioral health, a laboratory and an X-ray station. The units are completely self-contained and include amenities like heat and air conditioning, sinks, lights and necessary tools like X-ray machines and dental suction devices.

Everything is bolted down, Bidwell explained, so that the conex can be picked up using the standard machinery without fear of damage.

When the last three portable clinics are ready — each one taking about a week to finish and furnish — they can be taken as a set to different forward operating bases to treat Soldiers.

“Lt. Col. (Brian) Rogers and I talked, about a year ago, about doing something different,” said Co. C commander Capt. Russell Ritter. “We’re still forcing the Soldiers to come to us. This is an effort to push medical support forward and an attempt by the medical community to push it into sector, because it’s not easy for Soldiers to come in.

“With this capability we can push treatment out to guys who might otherwise not see it for months,” Ritter said.

The portable, self-contained clinics allow the doctors and medics who staff

them to make a minimal impact on the forward operating bases they visit. Staffers can sleep in the clinic, removing the need for extra billeting. The set of five connexes runs on a single generator which is transported with them.

“We don’t have to impede on anyone else’s area,” Ritter said.

The modular idea also means that specialized medical care can be conducted to normal standards.

“In the past when dentists and physical therapists went out, they had a level one aid station, and they needed to move things around. I think this is going to help a great deal,” Ritter said.

The company is also experimenting with lining the connexes with Kevlar planks.

“We’re trying to increase the force protection,” Bidwell said.

The plan, Ritter explained, is to send the collection of clinics out on three-to-four-day missions, then bring them back to refit, and send them somewhere else, rotating through the bases so that Soldiers can plan to be treated when the clinics arrive.

“It’s not like sick call,” he explained. “These are specialty areas.”

The Soldiers who staff the clinics will travel with them in shifts.

“Medics always want to be outside the wire,” said Bidwell. “We want to be where the Soldiers are.”

Getting the Doc-in-a-Box clinics fielded will help with that, she said.

“We feel like a valuable asset to the Co. C team, because we’re keeping Soldiers in the fight.”



*Spc. Paul McBee and Capt. Brian Meade, a dental team with Company C, 210th Brigade Support Battalion, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division (LI), check out the modular dental clinic created by the company inside a steel shipping container. The five modular clinics will enable the company to get specialized medical care to Soldiers in the field without bringing them back to a main camp.*





By Staff Sgt. Angela McKinzie  
2nd BCT PAO, 10th Mtn. Div. (LI)

**QARGHULI VILLAGE, Iraq** — Qarghuli Village is one of the wealthiest communities in Iraq, mostly because it was funded by Saddam Hussein before his fall of power. Terrorists migrated and settled in the area for money and safe haven.

In the past when the militaries have gone into the village, terrorists used a unique escape route – the Euphrates River.

Soldiers of the 4th Battalion, 31st Infantry Regiment, “Polar Bears,” 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division (LI), were able to stop terrorists from escaping the village by using air, land and water assets during Operation Polar Valor on Dec. 7.

“In the past, no one has used boats to go into the village,” Maj. Robert Griggs, the operations officer for 4-31. “We used boats to travel down the Euphrates in order to seal off any escape routes that the terrorists may use.”

Although the mission was complex to begin with, planning the date that it would occur was also a contributing factor in the operation. The Polar Bears chose to launch Operation Polar Valor on Dec. 7, the anniversary of the attack on Pearl Harbor, Hawaii.

“We try to pick days that the enemy knows are holi-

days to the Americans,” Griggs said. “It is during those times that the enemy is less likely to think we are going to do anything.”

The complex operation involved support from Soldiers of many companies and careful coordination to plan.

“In the past units have used helicopters and trucks to get into villages,” Griggs said. “This is the first time the 2nd BCT has used boats in combat operations. They (the boats) give us another way to get into the village.”

While Soldiers of Company A, the 4-31 Military Transition Team, and scouts traveled down the water, Soldiers of Company C air assaulted from the town of Yusufiyah, Iraq into the village.

See *Polar Valor*, page 10

*Operation*  
**Polar**





Photos by Staff Sgt. Angela McKinzie, 2nd BCT PAO, 10th Mtn. Div. (LI)

# Operation: Valot

Soldiers of the 4th Battalion, 31st Infantry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division (LI) use air, land and water assets to assault into Qarghuli Village, Iraq, Dec. 7.





By Capt. Dan McConnell  
2nd Bn., 14th Inf. Regt. 10th Mtn. Div. (LI)

CAMP DRAGON, Iraq — The year was 1969; members of the 2nd Battalion, 14th Infantry Regiment “Golden Dragons,” were conducting boat operations along the swamps and waterways of Vietnam. An after-action report, dated March 10, 1969, stated the purpose of the operations was to “destroy enemy forces, interdict movement and uncover supply caches.”

Thirty-seven years later, the Golden Dragon Soldiers are conducting boat operations in combat for the first time since Vietnam.

Soldiers from Task Force 2-14, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division (LI), will be conducting waterborne operations along the Euphrates River - similar to what the unit did there.

This time, the focus of the Golden Dragons will be to prevent the insurgents’ ability to cross the Euphrates River into the battalion’s area of operations and to search for enemy weapons caches on nearby islands and the shoreline on the far river bank which was previously inaccessible.

“Our unique partnership with the 502nd Engineers and its floating bridge MK II boats allow us to apply an innovative approach to surprise and envelop terrorists and prevent them from continued smuggling of weapons and foreign fighters into the Euphrates River Valley tribal lands,” said Lt. Col. John Valledor, 2-14 commander, as he described the aim of the Golden Dragons’ waterborne operations.

The Euphrates River has been an active cross-

ing point for insurgents since the Golden Dragons seized the large Yusufiyah Thermal Power Plant complex southwest of Baghdad, a former safe haven and base of operations for the Al Qaeda in Iraq.

Soldiers of Task Force 2-14 quickly established a strong presence in the area about a month ago, drastically reducing the enemy’s ability to organize attacks against the local Iraqi citizens and coalition forces in the area.

The Golden Dragons continue to use all available means to restore peace in the region setting the stage for a seamless and peaceful transition of authority to the Iraqi Army in the future.

Soldiers from 2-14 constantly interact with the local population in order to defeat the emplacement of roadside bombs, gain actionable intelligence on the insurgency, and find weapons caches. Taking to the water is just the next step for the Golden Dragons in their pursuit of the enemy.

Maj. Joel Smith of Brisbane, Australia, the battalion operations officer, describes the effect the Golden Dragons are having on the area.

“The seizure of the power plant by the Golden Dragons has blocked insurgent movement along the Eastern Euphrates River Valley. Our presence forced the anti-Iraqi forces to flee to the west side of the river,” he said.

“These boats will give us the freedom to reduce the last remaining insurgent safe haven in our area and demonstrate to the people of Iraq that we take every measure to eliminate AIF presence in their country.”

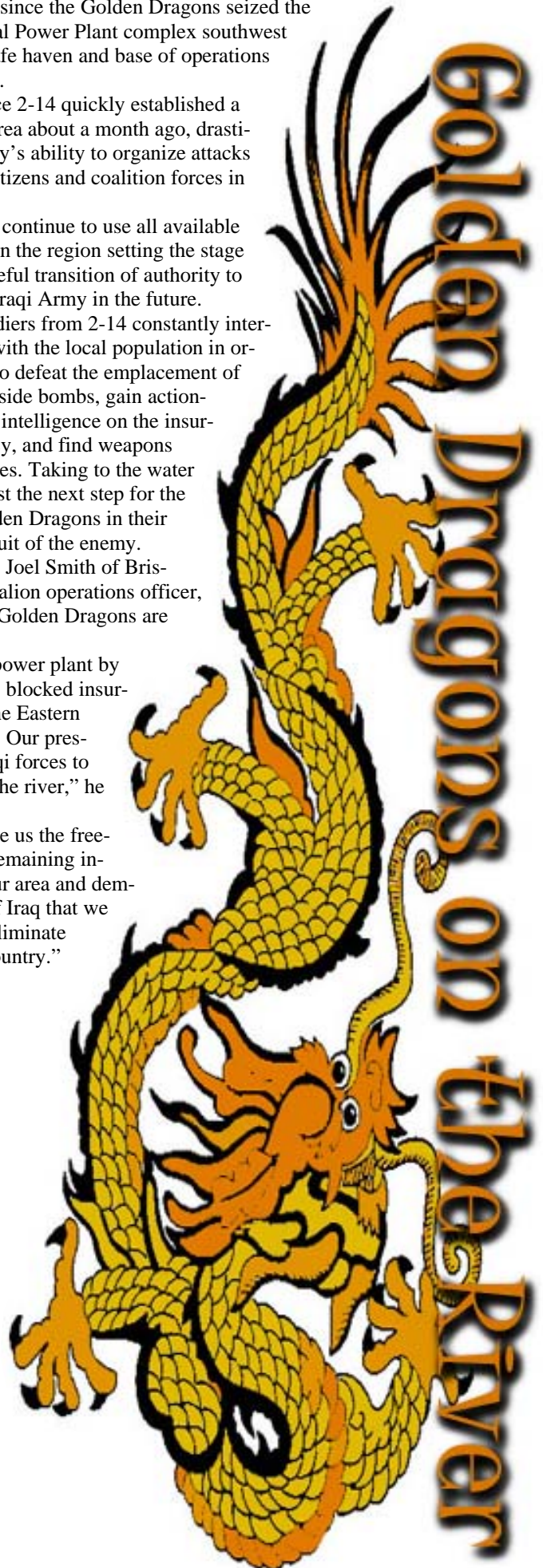
**“These boats ... demonstrate to the people of Iraq that we take every measure to eliminate AIF presence in their country.”**

**-Lt. Col. John Valledor**



Photo by Capt. Dan McConnell 2nd Bn., 14th Inf. Regt. 10th Mtn. Div. (LI)

*Soldiers of the 2nd Battalion, 14th Infantry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division (LI) ready boats for a waterborne assault on the Euphrates River Dec. 4.*





# Training in real life

## Joint Readiness Training Center observers taking lessons from 2nd BCT troops on the ground

By Spc. Chris McCann  
2nd BCT PAO, 10th Mtn. Div. (LI)

CAMP STRIKER, Iraq — “We’re here on a fact-finding mission,” said Maj. Mike Kimball, an observer-controller for the Joint Readiness Training Center at Fort Polk, La., visiting the Commando area of operations under the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division (LI).

“We strive to stay relevant because we’re charged with training Soldiers before they deploy. We’re the busiest combat training center, and we must stay relevant.”

To do that, Kimball and the other OCs visit troops downrange in Iraq and Afghanistan, studying what works and what doesn’t in the ever-changing war on terrorism.

“We send a smattering of people from different operations - information, aviation, fire support. We converge on a chosen brigade and spread out to see how they’re conducting operations.”

The team of eight officers spent 12 days in the area studying.



“It’s been absolutely invaluable,” Kimball said. The team has spent time with plans officers, company commanders, and troops on the ground. Kimball explained that what they learn is put into a trip report which is the genesis of the tactics, techniques and procedures that they coach deploying units on.

Kimball cited the 2nd BCT are not hesitating to get on the ground with Iraqi civilians as a great positive which will be taught to Soldiers preparing to head overseas.

“Dismounted operations are key,” he said. “No matter who you are, get out of the trucks, get out in the villages. Don’t commute to work.”

“We hadn’t actually seen it work,” Kimball said. The OCs were sure that it would be effective, but they had no proof.

“Now we’ve seen it work. We can say, ‘In country, they’re doing this, and it works’.”

Lt. Col. Dwight Duquesnay, the senior OC, gave the Commando Brigade high marks for the operations in the south Baghdad area.

“We were very well received by the units,” he said. “The Soldiers and leaders understand the importance of the training at the CTCs, and bent over backwards to integrate us.”

He also said that the brigade is performing very well.

“(The brigade) is in outstanding shape,” Duquesnay said.

“Sometimes we come to a newly formed brigade, but this one is at its peak, operating at a very high level. It’s refreshing to see.”

The lessons learned here are critical, he added.

“It will allow us to improve the training at JRTC,” he said.



Photo by Sgt. Nicole Kojetin, 1st Cav. Div. PAO

## Hail and farewell

The Hon. Donald Rumsfeld, Secretary of Defense, poses with Soldiers from the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division (LI) and the 1st Cavalry Division at Camp Liberty, Iraq Dec. 10. Rumsfeld visited the Soldiers on his final tour of Iraq and took time to listen to their stories of combat in Iraq and Afghanistan.



From *Polar Valor*, page 6

Meanwhile, Soldiers of Company D worked with engineers to clear a road from one strongpoint in the village to their link-up location with the other companies.

The intent of the mission was for all of the companies to meet up and establish a strongpoint within the village and stop any terrorist from escaping.

"It was nice to do something that you do not get to do every day," said Pfc. Eric Olson, an infantryman with Co. C. "The mission went smooth and everyone knew what they were doing – to include the Iraqi Army soldiers."

IA soldiers from the 4th Battalion, 4th Brigade, 6th Iraqi Army Division, participated in the operation and proved to be successful.

"The IA soldiers did well – they did everything the right way the first time," said Sgt. 1st Class Dell Rodriguez, the MITT sergeant. "They have been doing fairly well in everything and are eager to learn."

During the operation one of the IA soldiers had a chance to speak of the experience.

"The mission was great," said Lt. Hesham, an IA officer. "It is good that we are clearing a dangerous area from terrorists."

It was through the hard work, careful planning and constant communication that allowed the boats and the helicopters to arrive to Quarghuli Village at the same time. They were perfectly synchro-

nized with one another.

And having them arrive to the village at the same time proved to be successful. The noise of the helicopters masked the boat operation that was happening at the same time.

One of the local nationals stated that he did not know the U.S. Soldiers were coming into the village by boats since all he heard was the noise of the helicopter rotors.

After the companies met up, they set up a temporary battle position until they were able to establish a strong point within the village.

The operation did not allow any terrorists to escape the area.

"We expect to find any terrorists in the area within days," Griggs said. "The boats allowed us to seal off any area that the terrorists may have tried to use to escape."

During the operation three, non-detonated improvised explosive devices were found, six detainees were captured and Soldiers from Co. D were able to begin maintaining a permanent presence in the village.

"The Soldiers did a fantastic job," said Command Sgt. Maj. Alexander Jiminez, the 4-31 command sergeant. "They cleared an area, found a suitable place to maintain and find some stability and established a strongpoint."

In the end, the Soldiers said that they appreciated the experience.

"This was an experience that you could not get anywhere else but here," said Pfc. James Knight, a 4-31 infantryman.

## First Mahmudiyah Qadaa meeting fruitful, peaceful

By Spc. Chris McCann  
2nd BCT PAO, 10th Mtn. Div. (LI)

MAHMUDIYAH, Iraq — In the midst of a perception of spiraling violence, the Mahmudiyah *Qadaa*'s first-ever meeting brought together groups from across the sectarian divide in a positive and fruitful discussion Dec. 6.

The meeting, held at the Iraqi Army Compound in Mahmudiyah, Iraq, brought together *qadaa* representatives from Yusufiyah, Mahmudiyah, Al-Rashid and Lutfiyah, as well as Mahmudiyah Mayor Mr. Maayad Fadhl al-Shibli, Col. Ali al-Frejee, commander of the 4th Brigade, 6th Iraqi Army Division, Col. Mike Kershaw, commander of the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division (LI), Lt. Col. Robert Morschauer, commander of the 2nd Battalion, 15th Field Artillery Regiment, 2nd BCT, 10th Mtn. Div. (LI), and various Iraqi security and coalition forces and Iraqi government representatives.

Ali spoke in regard to the security situation in the Mahmudiyah area, mentioning various examples of security improvements over the last three years, but there is still a long way to go, he said.

"Improving the security situation will require the help of all the people here, and all the civilians that you have influence over," Ali said.

He also mentioned the numbers of Iraqi soldiers that have been killed and wounded in the defense of their country, and how many terrorists the soldiers have detained – including 81 people targeted by the Iraqi Ministry of Defense.

Ali also stated on camera that he wanted to tell the terrorists that the 4th Bde., 6th IA Division will not stop hunting them down, a sentiment echoed by Brigadier Gen. Ali, division commander.

The mayor discussed national reconciliation briefly, saying that Iraq has suffered greatly in the recent past and that the *qadaa* meetings are intended to help the people.

"We need to stop talking about religions and follow the initiatives of Prime Minister (Nouri) Al-Maliki," he said.

Several representatives from the Lutfiyah, Mahmudiyah, Al-Rasheed and Yusufiyah *nahias* spoke, mostly about the security situation and the fact that unemployment causes people turn to terrorism – because terror cells pay local residents to place improvised explosive devices, to fire upon Iraqi and coalition forces, and other acts of terrorism.

Most of the *nahia* representatives thanked the Americans for their assistance and called on tribal leaders to control their areas.

Abu Amar, a member of the Mahmudiyah city council and a Shia, spoke at length. Abu Amar said that his mission is to serve all

Iraqis from Mahmudiyah to Fallujah. He asked for help from the tribes with stopping the outsiders from entering the towns to do harm. Once this threat has stopped, there will be no need for armed men within the city.

Abu Amar, however, also said that he was proud of the Gheriri and Janabi tribes – both Sunni – and Anbari tribe, which is Shia, as well as all of the 20 tribes that are covered under the Mahmudiyah *qadaa* area.

"I used to go to any area and drink tea with people from any tribe," Abu Amar said. "We are one chain that cannot be divided."

He made a point of stating that attacks in Mahmudiyah kill women and children, and so everyone in the town carries a weapon, to protect their areas, although he wished that there would be no militia and no terrorism.

As a good will gesture to the attending members and as an act of reconciliation, Col. Ali presented a list of 17 detainees, both Sunni and Shia. He said that he had expedited the investigations into their arrests. The 17 had been found innocent and were to be released.

The high point of the meeting and perhaps the most cause for hope came near the end, when Col. Ali introduced Lt. Col. Abdul Muhsin, former commander of the 4th Battalion, 4th Brigade, 6th IA Division and now commander of the 2nd Battalion.

"What tribe are you from?" someone asked. Muhsin's reply brought a round of applause from those gathered.



# Buddy system, awareness protect Soldiers from sexual assault

By Pfc. Shea Butler  
7th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

**CAMP LIBERTY, Iraq** – If you work out by yourself, walk to your hooch at night without a battle buddy or are unaware of your surroundings, you are a statistic waiting to happen. You are vulnerable to a predator with no face, rank or gender.

Sexual assault can happen to anyone, but there are ways to reduce the risk of you or your battle buddy becoming a victim. If you know of someone who has already been assaulted or you have, personally, there are trained individuals who can help.

An important prevention technique is utilizing the battle buddy system during all hours of the day.

“Using the battle buddy system is a deterrent to attackers. It makes their job to hard if you are around other people,” said Sgt. 1st Class Celetia Carroll, sexual assault response coordinator for Headquarters and Headquarters Company, Division Special Troops Battalion, 1st Cavalry Division, Multi-National Division - Baghdad.

If you walk with a buddy, then there is someone there to protect you if anything were to happen, Carroll added.

Though it might seem obvious, another prevention method is awareness. Being aware of people and your surroundings is important.

“Soldiers should memorize their surroundings and be able to detect if something or someone is out of place,” Carroll said.

There are people trained to help those who have been victimized by sexual assault. They are called Sexual Assault Response Coordinators or SARCs. SARCs are available where Army personnel are located, on stateside and overseas installations and in deployed areas. Every installation has an Installation Victim Advocate (IVA) or a Unit Victim Advocate (UVA). All of these people are prepared and willing to help those who have been assaulted.

Leaders should know

who their SARCs and UVAs are and how to reach them. They should pass the information on to their troops, Carroll said.

If you or someone you know has been a victim of sexual assault you should report it to a SARC.

“There is a 24-hour sexual assault hotline (Iraqna number 07901932392) that Soldiers can call for advice on reporting or just to talk about the incident,” said Master Sgt. Delionel Meadows, the division’s Equal Opportunity noncommissioned officer in charge.

There are two ways of reporting an incident: Restricted and unrestricted reporting, Carroll explained.

Restricted reporting allows the victim to disclose minimal details of their assault to

specific individuals. Victims are able to get medical treatment, advocacy and counseling without triggering an official investigation, she said.

If the victim wants to keep the case restricted, then they should only converse with people designated by a SARC/UVA. As soon as a Soldier tells the chain of command or anyone else, the case is no longer restricted, Meadows stressed.

Victims must acknowledge in writing that restricted reporting may limit the ability of the government to prosecute the offender, Carroll said.

Whether a Soldiers’ report of an assault is restricted or unrestricted, they should contact a SARC first for the proper advice and to go through their rights, Meadows stressed.

The victim has the right to switch from restricted to unrestricted reporting at any time, but they can’t go from unrestricted to restricted, Carroll said.

Unrestricted reporting allows the victim to receive medical treatment, advocacy, counseling and an official investigation.

The chain of command is notified in unrestricted reporting, but details of the incident will be limited to only those personnel who have a legitimate need to know, Carroll said. It is strictly the victim’s choice on how to report an incident of sexual assault. Either way, it needs to be reported so the victim can receive help.







*Staff Sgt. Timothy Slaughter, Spc. Timothy Bussing and Pfc. Robert Johnson of the 1st Squadron, 89th Cavalry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division (LI), receive Purple Heart medals for injuries suffered in combat from Col. Mike Kershaw, commander of the 2nd BCT, Lt. Col. Mark Suich, commander of 1-89 Cav. Regt., and 1-89 Command Sgt. Maj. Fred Morris at Camp Striker, Iraq, Dec. 3.*

Photo by Spc. Chris McCann, 2nd BCT PAO

From:



Free Mail

To: